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Solution to Unending Mideast Crises May Lie in First Jewish Homeland

By Michael Collins Piper

A GROWING NUMBER OF PROPONENTs of a just peace in the Middle East view what has been called the "Birobidjan Option" as the final (and equitable) solution to the ongoing problem of Palestine, where Jewish settlers from Europe and the United States (and from other countries) displaced native Arabs (Christian and Muslim alike) and established the state of Israel in 1948.

Among the most prominent of those publicizing the Birobidjan solution to the Middle East crisis is Lady Michele Renouf, the glamorous British television personality whose forthright advocacy of freedom of thought and expression has led her into direct confrontation with forces in the pro-Israel lobby determined to silence any and all opinion (or historical facts) that conflict with its agenda. (For more on the efforts of Lady Renouf, see her website at jailingopinions.com)

What then is Birobidjan and how does it relate to the problems of the Middle East? The fact that few people know is that in 1928 there was established (under the auspices of the Soviet Union) the first-ever modern Jewish state known colloquially as Birobidjan (alternatively spelled "Birobidzhan") located on the border of Russia and China, not far from the Pacific Ocean.

Birobidjan was the first territorial-administrative entity in the world designated for the Jewish people on the basis of their Jewish nationality. In short, Israel was not the first Jewish state. Birobidjan was—and it was in existence years before Israel came into being.

Jews worldwide were invited to come voluntarily to this Jewish homeland, known officially as the Jewish Autonomous Region, and many did, including more than 1,000 Jews from outside the Soviet Union.

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And the language of the Ashkenazi Jewish people— Yiddish—was made the official language of this Jewish state. [The word "Yiddish" ["Juden Deutsche"] means "Jewish German" and is, in short, pidgin German with a Jewish slant. Eastern Yiddish is characterized by the admixture of more Slavic words. Yiddish is, however, written in the Hebrew alphabet.—Ed.]

American Jewish organizations lent their support to this project, including "Ambidjan"—the American Birobidjan Committee — whose officials included Albert Einstein and the prominent American Jewish author B.Z. Goldberg.

This first Jewish state of the 20th century preceded the birth of Israel in Palestine by more than 20 years. Yet, in 1948, Israel was established, in the wake of much bloodshed and destruction rained upon the Christian and Muslim peoples of Palestine.

Since then millions of displaced Palestinians, forced from their homes, have struggled to survive, many living in open-air ghettoes that are no more than what are known as concentration camps. This ugly history is well-known to small numbers of peoples across the planet, but still remains a mystery to Americans.

Today there are those — including this writer—who advocate the peaceful relocation of the Jews now in Palestine to Birobidjan.

Lady Renouf has assessed what could be accomplished by a rejuvenated Jewish state in Birobidjan: "By resettling Jews in the original pre-Israel homeland, Palestine could be restored to its rightful owners, the victims of the 20th century's longest, most notorious and enduring injustice."

In fact, today, Birobidjan is a virtual Jewish paradise. The home of two synagogues, Birobidjan City has 77,250 inhabitants. Yiddish theaters opened in the 1970s. Yiddish and Jewish traditions have been required components in all public schools for almost 15 years, taught not as Jewish exotica but as part of the region's national heritage."

The Birobidjan Synagogue, completed in 2004, is next to a complex housing Sunday School classrooms, a library, a museum and administrative offices. The buildings were officially opened in 2004 to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast (JAR). Concerning the Jewish community of the region, Governor Nikolay Mikhaylovich Volkov stated that he intends to "support every valuable initiative maintained by our local Jewish organizations."

In 2007, the First Birobidjan International Summer Program for Yiddish Language and Culture was launched byYiddish studies professor Boris Kotlerman of Bar-Ilan University. For the Chanukah celebration of 2007, officials of Birobidjan in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast claimed to have built the world's largest menorah. The Birobidjan Jewish National University works in cooperation with the local religious community. The university is unique in the Russian Far East. The basis of the training course is study of the Hebrew language, history and classic Jewish texts.

The town now boasts several state-run schools that teach Yiddish, as well as an Anglo-Yiddish faculty at its higher education college, a Yiddish school for religious instruction and a kindergarten. The five-to seven-year-olds spend two lessons a week learning to speak Yiddish, as well as being taught Jewish songs, dance and traditions. The school menorah was created in 1991. It is a public school that offers a half-day Yiddish and Jewish curriculum for those parents who choose it. About half the school's 120 pupils are enrolled in the Yiddish course. Many of them continue on to Public School No. 2, which offers the same half-day Yiddish/ Jewish curriculum from first through 12th grade. Yiddish also is offered at Birobidzhan's Pedagogical Institute, one of the only university-level Yiddish courses in Russia. Today, the city's 14 public schools must teach Yiddish and Jewish tradition.

Advocates of the Birobidjan option for solving the Middle East crisis say that first steps would include formal recognition of Birobidjan as the world's only self-governing Jewish state and that areas of the Middle East now known as "Israel," "Gaza" and the "West Bank" would constitute the new state of Palestine. Naturally, the United Nations and the United States (in particular) as well as other nations and entities that have been concerned with the Middle East would provide all necessary assistance for the relocation of Jews now living in Israel to Birobidjan and encourage all nations able to assist to do so.

Some people of good will have gone so far as to suggest that U.S. foreign aid and German national Holocaust reparations payments earmarked for Israel be redirected to the purpose of airlifting from Palestine all Jewish inhabitants to Birobidjan and the transfer of all of their personal possessions; that aid money be used for the construction of homes for the Jewish immigrants to Birobidjan. In the future, aid and reparations previously earmarked for Israel would be redirected to Birobidjan.

The whole issue is subject to debate, but those who view Birobidjan as an answer to the Middle East conflict generally conclude it provides a humane proposal that can nurture the first-ever Jewish homeland and bring a final solution to the enduring problem of Palestine.

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Michael Collins Piper can be heard every week day night live on the Internet at republicbroadcasting.org. He is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem: Zionist Power in America*** , ***The Judas Goats: The Enemy Within***, ***Dirty Secrets: Crime, Conspiracy & Cover-Up in the 20th Century***, ***The GOLEM: Israel's Hell Bomb***, and ***Target: Traficant.*** These works can be found at America First Books and FIRST AMENDMENT BOOKS: 1-888-699-NEWS. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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